

## THE RHETORIC OF QUESTIONS: A PROPOSED TERMINOLOGY

As an act of speech, the posing of a question seems to involve automatically a listener or sounding-board (*das Gegenüber*, as the Germans sometimes call it) with whom the questioner intends to make contact or believes he already has contact. In fact, however, the sounding-board may be the self, or the gods, or the physical environment; and even when the sounding-board is another person present in the vicinity, there can be various degrees of contact. In studying instances of incomplete or imperfect contact or of outright discontinuity, it will be useful to have a terminology that represents the point of the act of questioning and the attitude of the questioner with more precision than is offered by the traditional dichotomy between "rhetorical question" and "true (non-rhetorical) question," for there are different kinds of questions which are not intended to elicit a verbal answer, there are responses other than verbal which a question may be intended to (and may fail to) elicit, and some ostensibly "rhetorical" questions do receive answers in certain contexts, so that the criterion implied by the usual definition of a rhetorical question is of limited value.

The terminology presented here is based on a process of transformation of the interrogative sentence into a declarative or imperatival form which brings to the surface the attitude and intent of the utterance.<sup>1</sup> The classification is useful in two ways: it provides a framework which forces us to be quite clear about what is going on rhetorically in a given passage (as we shall see, failure to be clear about this has often hindered both textual criticism and dramatic interpretation); and it brings to light many typical rhetorical patterns or typical situations and allows us to separate the normal and the unproblematic from the abnormal and the problematic. The terminology is designed to describe especially those cases in which a question is not followed in an obvious way by a verbal answer; but in such a complicated process as verbal communication it is not surprising that diverse intents may be combined in one utterance, so that a strictly rhetorical intent is occasionally combined with the information-seeking intent of a "true question." To meet this complication, I have established a limited number of standard pat-

1. The classificatory technique which I have evolved owes something to my (limited) knowledge of transformational grammar and something also to the analytic technique for moral utterances ("phrastic" vs. "neustic") developed by R. M. Hare in *The Language of Morals* (Oxford 1952). Philosophers (even of the modern school of "linguistic philosophy") seem to deal with questions only from the point of view of formal logic: cf. C. L. Hamblin, "Questions" in *Encyclopedia of Philosophy* ed. Paul Edwards, vol. 7 (New York 1967) 49-53; Mary and Arthur Prior, "Erotetic Logic," *Philosophical Review* 64 (1955) 43-59; David Harrah, "A Logic of Questions and Answers," *Philosophy of Science* 28 (1961) 40-46. Richard Hamilton brings to my attention A. W. M. Whorter, "The Deliberative Type of Question as a Rhetorical and Dramatic Device in Greek Tragedy," *TAPA* 63 (1932) xlv-xlvi, an abstract which sketches a classification but offers no examples or discussion.

terns, but recognize hybrids or combinations of them. Where hybrids occur, the important point is to determine the main intent(s) of the utterance. The terminology is therefore a tool, a useful shorthand, and not a mechanical substitute for interpreting the dramatic text.

### 1. "TRUE" OR INFORMATION-SEEKING QUESTIONS

The process of transformation applied here is easily illustrated in the case of the most straightforward kind of question, that which seeks information. The intent of a direct information-seeking question may be brought out by substituting for it the corresponding indirect question preceded by the imperative "tell me (us)." In a normal situation the answerer immediately does tell:

*Pe.* 727-728

Δα. καὶ τί δὴ πράξασιν αὐτοῖς ὧδ' ἐπιστενάξετε;

Βα. ναυτικὸς στρατὸς κακῶθεις πεζὸν ὄλεσε στρατόν.

In fact, for the sake of variety, liveliness, or emphasis the "true" question is at times expressed in the indirect form dependent on an imperative or its equivalent:

*Pe.* 717

τίς δ' ἐμῶν ἐκεῖσε παίδων ἐστρατηλάτει, φράσον.

*Pe.* 230-231

κεῖνο δ' ἐκμαθεῖν θέλω,  
ὦ φίλοι· ποῦ τὰς Ἀθήνας φασὶν ἰδρῦσθαι χθονός;<sup>2</sup>

### 2. "RHETORICAL" QUESTIONS

#### (a) ASSENT-SEEKING QUESTIONS

##### (1) rhetorical transform questions

When we turn to questions other than information-seeking ones, the simplest transformation involves those of the following sort:

*Se.* 673

τίς ἄλλος μᾶλλον ἐνδικιώτερος;

*OT* 895-896

εἰ γὰρ αἱ τοιαῖδε πράξεις τίμαι,  
τί δεῖ με χορεύειν;

*Alk.* 942-943

τίν' ἂν προσειπῶν, τοῦ δὲ προσρηθῆεις ὕπο,  
τερπνῆς τύχοιμ' ἂν εἰσόδου;<sup>3</sup>

2. The anticipatory demonstrative *κεῖνο* indicates that a colon should separate prefatory remark from actual question, but Page and Murray both have a comma (Wilamowitz has the correct colon).

3. Murray is wrong to print Lenting's ἐξόδου. Cf. Dale *ad loc.*

In each case the question is equivalent to a declaration with a negative (or a zero-quantifier and relative clause) substituted for the interrogative: “who?” becomes “no one” or “there is no one who,” “what need?” becomes “there is no need,” etc. A question of this sort containing a negative is equivalent to a declarative with a universal quantifier (“who . . . not?” becomes “everyone”):

*S.El.* 975-976  
 τίς γάρ ποτ' ἀστῶν ἢ ξένων ἡμᾶς ἰδὼν  
 τοιοῖσδ' ἐπαίνοις οὐχὶ δεξιῶσεται;

The point of the interrogative form is to elicit the silent agreement or assent of the addressee and/or to emphasize, and involve the listener in accepting, the self-evident truth of the proposition. In a context of self-persuasion, the addressee may be the questioner himself. The simple rhetorical effect of this sort of question is perhaps what comes most readily to mind when one thinks of the traditional term “rhetorical question.” Since no further elaboration is needed in explaining this type of question, it may be assigned the bland title *rhetorical transform* question.<sup>4</sup>

Rhetorical transform questions are often abbreviated in idiomatic usage. In dialogue or in rhesis confirmation of an affirmative proposition (“of course,” “certainly”) may be expressed telegraphically with *πῶς γὰρ οὐ*; or *πῶς δ' οὐ*; (=“there is no way in which X could not be true”) or the like (e.g. *Choe.* 754, *Eum.* 435, *S.El.* 1307). After a negative proposition, *πῶς γάρ*; or *πόθεν*; (=“there is no way in which X could be true”) or the like may express confirmation (e.g. *S.El.* 911, *Hek.* 613).<sup>5</sup> Sometimes the abbreviated idiomatic question is accompanied by a subordinate clause (e.g. *OT* 1015, *Ion* 1543).

## 2(a)(2) apodeictic questions

There are other assent-seeking questions which can be transformed into declarative propositions about particular facts, with no universal quantifier implied. These occur typically in a real or imagined argument when a speaker strongly compels assent to a particular statement by casting it in interrogative form (implying “you must agree that this is so . . .”; sometimes in a taunting tone). Such questions may be termed *apodeictic*. Many of the obvious examples of apodeictic questions are introduced by *ἄρα* (or *ἄρ' οὐ* or *ἄρα μή*), a particle which introduces other types of question as well:

*Choe.* 297  
 τοιοῖσδε χρησμοῖς ἄρα χρῆ πεποιθέναι;

*Se.* 208-210  
 ὁ ναύτης ἄρα μή'ς πρῶραν φυγῶν  
 πρύμνηθεν ἤρπε μηχανὴν σωτηρίας  
 νεῶς καμούσης ποντίῳ σὺν κύματι;

*OT* 823  
 ἄρ' οὐχὶ πᾶς ἄναγνος;

4. An instance of rhetorical transformation of this type is recognized and commented on in the verbose *Σ Med.* 500.

5. Cf. Stevens on *Andr.* 83; Denniston, *GP*<sup>2</sup> 85-86, where τί γάρ; and τί μήν; are also explained.

*Alk.* 771-772 (in a soliloquy)  
 ἄρα τὸν ξένον  
 στυγῶ δικαίως, ἐν κακοῖς ἀφιγμένον;

In other cases a simple οὐ (*OK* 838 οὐκ ἠγόρευον ταῦτ' ἐγώ;) or μή (*Pe.* 344) or μή οὖν = μῶν (*A.Su.* 417, *Med.* 567) may suffice.

## 2(b) APORETIC AND DELIBERATIVE QUESTIONS

### 2(b)(1) aporetic questions

For the purposes of this study a distinction will be made between questions in which possible courses of behavior are viewed *en masse* with an attitude of *aporia* (i.e. uncertainty, indecision, or embarrassment at the wealth of possibilities) and those in which the adoption of a particular course of behavior is debated. The former type will be designated *aporetic*: the declarative transformation implied is "I am at a loss (*or* I don't know) what to do, what to say, how to do X, etc."<sup>6</sup> The following examples illustrate the class of aporetic questions:

*Ag.* 648  
 πῶς κεδνά τοῖς κακοῖσι συμμείξω . . . ;

*Choe.* 997  
 τί νιν προσεῖπω, κἂν τύχῳ μάλ' εὐστομῶν;

*Ai.* 457  
 καὶ νῦν τί χρῆ δρᾶν;

*OT* 1419  
 οἴμοι, τί δῆτα λέξομεν πρὸς τόνδ' ἔπος;

*Alk.* 912-914  
 ὦ σχῆμα δόμων, πῶς εἰσέλθω;  
 πῶς δ' οἰκήσω μεταπίπτοντος  
 δαίμονος;

*Phoin.* 1172  
 Καπανεύς δὲ πῶς εἶπομι' ἂν ὡς ἐμαίνεται;

### 2(b)(2) deliberative questions

The term *deliberative* question, on the other hand, will here be limited to those cases in which a person asks himself about a specific course of action: "Am I to do X?" (declarative transformation: "I am deliberating, am uncertain, whether to do X").

*Choe.* 998-999  
 ἄγρευμα θηρὸς [νιν προσεῖπω], ἢ νεκροῦ ποδένδυτον  
 δροίτης κατασκήνωμα;

6. For the actual use of the declarative form cf. *Med.* 376-377: πολλὰς δ' ἔχουσα θανασίμους αὐτοῖς ὁδοῦς, / οὐκ οἶδ' ὅποιά πρῶτον ἐγχειρῶ.

*Ai.* 460-461

πότερα πρὸς οἴκους, ναυλόχους λιπῶν ἔδρας  
μόνους τ' Ἀτρείδας, πέλαγος Αἰγαίου περῶ;

Deliberative questions are the natural follow-up to an aporetic question, as is clear from the examples from *Choe.* and *Ai.* given above and from the frequent occurrence of sequences like the following:

*Hek.* 737-738

Ἐκάβη, τί δράσω; πότερα προσπέσω γόνυ  
Ἄγαμέμνονος τοῦδ' ἢ φέρω σιγῇ κακά;

*Ion* 756 and 758

εἶέν τί δρώμεν; θάνατος ὧν κείται περὶ . . .  
εἴπωμεν ἢ σιγώμεν; ἢ τί δράσομεν;

Aporitic and deliberative questions usually occur in contexts featuring some degree of abstraction from close contact with a listener, whether this be actual physical solitude or temporary withdrawal from contact or merely the mild distance created by self-conscious rhetoric (*Phoin.* 1172, above). There are, however, questions which are identical in form to aporetic and deliberative questions, but which appeal directly to a listener for advice; that is, they establish (or presuppose) close contact. When the advice-seeking function is uppermost, the question operates in the manner of a "true" question and may be explicated through transformation to an imperatival rather than declarative form: "Tell me what I am to do" or "Tell me whether or not I am to do X." For example, in *Choe.* 84-105 the long series of questions which are aporetic and deliberative in form (87-99) is framed by appeals for help in reaching a decision (84-86 and 100-105): the degree of contact and the consequent difference in rhetorical and dramatic force distinguish these from the sequences illustrated above.

### 2(c) AGNOETIC QUESTIONS

Contact between questioner and listener(s) is also low or non-existent when the speaker is in ignorance or confusion about what has happened, what is happening, or what will or may happen and asks a question either with no expectation that anyone will answer (because no one knows the answer or no one able to answer is present) or with no certain expectation of an answer (because the speaker has not previously established contact with the potential answerer). Such questions may be viewed as convertible to declarations such as "I don't know whether (who, what) . . ." or "I wonder whether . . ." and may be termed *agnoetic*, since the main point is the speaker's ignorance or incomprehension of some state of affairs. When an agnoetic question refers to a prospective state of affairs, it may be quite similar to an aporetic or deliberative question, but the latter forms refer only to the speaker's own actions. The following are prospective agnoetic questions:

*Se.* 93-94

τίς ἄρα ρύσεται, τίς ἄρ' ἐπαρκέσει  
θεῶν ἢ θεάν;

*Choe.* 1075-1076

ποιῖ δῆτα κρανεῖ, ποῖ καταλήξει  
μετακοιμισθὲν μένος ἄτης;

*Tro.* 1188-1189

τί καί ποτε  
γράψειεν ἄν σε μουσσοπιός ἐν τάφῳ;

Agnoetic questions referring to the present or past are especially common in contexts of minimal contact, such as in choral odes, in "throw-away" choral couplets, and upon the entrance of a character.

(choral ode) *Ag.* 681-687

τίς ποτ' ὀνόμαζεν ὠδ' ἐς τὸ πᾶν ἐτητύμως . . . ;<sup>7</sup>

(choral ode) *A.Su.* 1045-1046

τί ποτ' εὐπλοῖαν ἐπραζαν  
ταχυπόμποισι διωγμοῖς;

(entrance) *PV* 114-115

ἄ ἄ ἔα ἔα·  
τίς ἀχώ, τίς ὁδὸν προσέπτα μ' ἀφεγγής;

(entrance) *E.Su.* 87-89

τίνων γόνων ἤκουσα καὶ στέρνων κτύπον  
νεκρῶν τε θρήνους, τῶνδ' ἀνακτόρων ἄπο  
ἤχοῦς ἰούσης;

(choral couplet) *Tro.* 292-293

τὸ μὲν σὸν οἶσθα, πότνια, τὰς δ' ἐμάς τύχας  
τίς ἄρ' Ἀχαιῶν ἢ τίς Ἑλλήνων ἔχει;

Just as an aporetic question may be followed by a narrower deliberative question, so a broad agnoetic question may be followed by narrower or more specific agnoetic questions, especially alternative ones:

*Pe.* 144-149

πῶς ἄρα πράσσει Ξέρξης βασιλεὺς  
Δαρειογενής;  
πότερον τόξου ῥύμα τὸ νικῶν,  
ἢ δορικράνου  
λόγχης ἰσχύς κεκράτηκεν;

*IT* 576-577

φεῦ φεῦ· τί δ' ἡμεῖς οἱ τ' ἐμοὶ γεννήτορες;  
ἄρ' εἰσίν; ἄρ' οὐκ εἰσὶ; τίς φράσειεν ἄν;

7. The main question is agnoetic: "we are amazed and in ignorance as to who did it so truly." Parenthetically, or as a change of direction in mid-sentence, an apodeictic question is intruded: "Was it not someone . . . ?" = "indeed, it was someone . . ."

## 2(d) INDIGNANT AND SURPRISED QUESTIONS

## 2(d)(1) apistetic questions

Sometimes the primary purpose of uttering a question is to express disbelief, surprise, shock, or dismay at what has happened, is happening, or is about to happen. Assuming the declarative transformation "I can hardly believe (I am shocked at) X," we may coin the term *apistetic*<sup>8</sup> to describe such questions.

*Choe.* 909  
πατροκτονούσα γὰρ ξυνοικήσεις ἐμοί;

*Eum.* 717-718  
ἦ καὶ πατήρ τι σφάλλεται βουλευμάτων  
πρωτοκτόνοισι προστροπαῖς Ἰξίονος;

*Ai.* 1226-1227  
σὲ δὴ τὰ δεινὰ ῥήματ' ἀγγέλλουσί μοι  
τλῆναι καθ' ἡμῶν ὠδ' ἀνοιμῶκετὶ χανεῖν;<sup>9</sup>

*Trach.* 1133  
οἴμοι· πρὶν ὡς χρῆν σφ' ἐξ ἐμῆς θανεῖν χερός;

*Hipp.* 415-416  
αἶ πῶς ποτ' . . .  
βλέπουσιν ἐς πρόσωπα τῶν ξυνευεντῶν . . .;

*Tro.* 978-981  
πότερον ἀμείνον' ὡς λάβη Διὸς πόσιν;  
ἦ γάμον Ἀθηνᾶ θεῶν τινος θηρωμένη,<sup>10</sup>  
ἦ παρθeneίαν πατρός ἐξητήσατο,  
φεύγουσα λέκτρα;

The most frequently-used apistetic questions in tragedy are the short exclamations τί φῆς; πῶς φῆς; and τί (πῶς) εἶπας; These occasionally express (a) a real inability to assimilate what has just been said and a real need for repetition or clarification; but more commonly they express (b) dismay or surprise at what has just been said and clearly comprehended (it is then equivalent to a strong "What!" or "Oh, no!"):

(a) *Ag.* 268  
πῶς φῆς; πέφευγε τοῦπος ἐξ ἀπιστίας.

*Trach.* 349-350  
τί φῆς; σαφῶς μοι φράζε πᾶν ὅσον νοεῖς·  
ἄ μὲν γὰρ ἐξείρηκας ἀγνοία μ' ἔχει

(b) *PV* 773  
πῶς εἶπας; ἦ 'μὸς παῖς σ' ἀπαλλάξει κακῶν;

8. Cf. *Σ Med.* 695: ἀπιστῶν τοῦτο λέγει.

9. Dawe prints a semicolon instead of a question mark; I prefer the latter, with Jebb and Pearson.

10. I return to the interpretation of the old editions; Murray, Biehl, and Lee print τίνοος.

*Phil.* 1237

τί φῆς, Ἀχιλλέως παῖ; τίν' εἰρηκας λόγον; (cf. 1238-1240)

*E.El.* 556

τί φῆς; ὄδ' ὅς σὸν ἐξέκλεψε σύγγονον;

*Ba.* 1032-1033

πῶς φῆς; τί τοῦτ' ἔλεξας; ἢ 'πὶ τοῖς ἐμοῖς  
χαίρεις κακῶς πράσσουσι δεσπότης, γύναϊ;

## 2(d)(2) epiplectic questions

An apistetic question may, in addition to implying “I am shocked, I am unable to believe . . .,” carry the implication “I can’t believe that *you* mean X or are doing Y,” or “*You* can’t possibly mean X or be doing Y,” from which it is a small step to “You shouldn’t mean X or be doing Y.” When the attitude of disbelief or shock is thus used to rebuke, browbeat, or admonish another person, the question may suitably be called *epiplectic*.<sup>11</sup>

*Ag.* 1543-1546

ἢ σὺ τόδ' ἔρξαι τλήση, κτείνας'  
ἄνδρα τὸν αὐτῆς ἀποκωκύσαι  
ψυχῇ τ' ἄχαριν χάριν ἀντ' ἔργων  
μεγάλων ἀδίκως ἐπικράναι;

*Ai.* 288-291

κάγῳ 'πιπλήσω καὶ λέγω· τί χρήμα δρᾶς,  
Αἴας; τί τήνδ' ἄκλητος οὐθ' ὑπ' ἀγγέλων  
κληθεῖς ἀφορμᾶς πείραν οὔτε του κλύων  
σάλπιγος;

*OT* 1391-1393

ἰὼ Κιθαίων, τί μ' ἐδέχου; τί μ' οὐ λαβῶν  
ἔκτεινας εὐθύς, ὡς ἔδειξα μήποτε  
ἐμαυτὸν ἀνθρώποισιν ἐνθεν ἢ γεγῶς;

*S.El.* 328-329

τίν' αὐ σὺ τήνδε πρὸς θυρῶνος ἐξόδοις  
ἐλθοῦσα φωνεῖς, ὦ κασιγνήτη, φάτιν . . .;

*Hipp.* 439-440

ἐρᾶς; τί τοῦτο θαῦμα; σὺν πολλοῖς βροτῶν.  
κάπειτ' ἔρωτος οὐνεκα ψυχὴν ὀλεῖς;

*E.El.* 1107-1108<sup>12</sup>

σὺ δ' ὦδ' ἄλουτος καὶ δυσείματος χροᾶ  
λεχῶ νεογνῶν ἐκ τόκων πεπαυμένη;

*Hipp.* 490

τί σεμνομυθεῖς;

11. For the name, cf. *Ai.* 288 (quoted below), *OK* 1730.

12. The force and position of this couplet are discussed below, Chapter 5, section 7.



*Alk.* 551-552

τί δρῶς; τοιαύτης συμφορᾶς προκειμένης,  
"Ἄδητε, τολμᾶς ξενοδοκεῖν; τί μῶρος εἶ;

*HF* 975-976

. . . ὦ τεκῶν, τί δρῶς; τέκνα  
κτείνεις;

*A.Su.* 911-913

οὔτος τί ποιεῖς; ἐκ ποίου φρονήματος  
ἀνδρῶν Πελασγῶν τήνδ' ἀτιμάζεις χθόνα;  
ἀλλ' ἦ γυναικῶν ἐς πόλιν δοκεῖς μολεῖν;

As the examples above show, the epiplectic force of such utterances can be directed to past actions as well as present or prospective behavior, and a sharp epiplectic question may be the equivalent of a severe admonition or even a prohibition ("What are you doing?" implying "Don't do that!"). The effect of prohibition is also noticeable in certain brief idiomatic epiplectic questions which dismiss a topic or a word, whether one's own or someone else's:

*PV* 101

καίτοι τί φημί;

*E.Su.* 750 and *Phoin.* 382

ἀτὰρ τί ταῦτα;

*PV* 766

τί δ' ὄντιν' (*sc.* γάμον); οὐ γὰρ ῥητὸν αὐδᾶσθαι τόδε.

*OT* 1056

τί δ' ὄντιν' εἶπε; μηδὲν ἐντραπής.

*Phoin.* 1726-1727

τί τλάς; τί τλάς; οὐχ ὀρᾶ Δίκα κακοῦς,  
οὐδ' ἀμείβεται βροτῶν ἀσυνεσίας.

*IA* 460-461

τήν δ' αὖτάλαιναν παρθένον—τί παρθένον;  
"Αἰδῆς νιν, ὡς εἶοικε, νυμφεύσει τάχα.—

## 2(e) IMPERATIVAL AND OPTATIVAL QUESTIONS

### 2(e)(1) imperatival questions

There are two major classes of questions that may be treated as equivalent to imperatives. The first features the very common use of οὐ + fut. ind. to express an exhortation, recommendation, or command (or οὐ + μή + fut. ind. for a prohibition):

*Se.* 250

οὐ σίγα μηδὲν τῶνδ' ἔρεῖς κατὰ πτόλιν;

*Eum.* 124

οὐκ ἀναστήσει τάχος;

*Ant.* 885

οὐκ ἄξεθ' ὡς τάχιστα;

*Hipp.* 498-499

ὦ δεινὰ λέξασ', οὐχὶ συγκλήσεις στόμα  
καὶ μὴ μεθήσεις αὐθις αἰσχίστους λόγους;

The second class includes questions which contain verbs of perception like κλύω, ἀκούω, ὄράω, λεύσσω. In some cases the poets choose to create a formal counterpointing of question and answer (e.g. ὄρᾳς; . . . ὄρῶ, *Hek.* 760-761, *Hipp.* 1395-1396). But many interrogative sentences containing such verbs are used to invite or command someone to direct his attention to something. Such questions are common in appeals to the gods or to some other sympathetic audience not physically within range of one's voice, but even if the addressee is physically present no verbal answer is needed:

*Med.* 160-161

ὦ μεγάλα Θέμι καὶ πότνι' Ἄρτεμι  
λεύσσειθ' ἅ πάσχω . . . ;<sup>13</sup>

*Phoin.* 611

ὦ πάτερ, κλύεις ἅ πάσχω;

*Med.* 168 (nurse to the chorus)

κλύειθ' οἷα λέγει . . . ;

## 2(e)(2) optative questions

Questions containing τίς (πῶς, etc.) ἄν + opt. may have either agnoetic force or the force of rhetorical transform questions (e.g. *Ag.* 1341-1342 τίς ἄν ἐξεύξαιτο βροτῶν ὄσινεῖ / δαίμονι φῶναι τάδ' ἀκούων; = οὐδείς ἄν . . . ). When an element of wishing is added to the agnoetic element ("I don't know who might do X, but I wish someone would do X"), the question may be termed *optative*:

*Ag.* 1448-1451

φεῦ, τίς ἄν ἐν τάχει μὴ περιώδυνος  
μηδὲ δεμνιοτήρης  
μόλοι τὸν αἰεὶ φέρουσ' ἐν ἡμῖν  
μοῖρ' ἀτέλευτον ὕπνον . . . ;

*Phil.* 1213-1214

ὦ πόλις ὦ πόλις πατρία,  
πῶς ἄν εἰσίδοιμί σ' ἀθλιός γ' ἀνὴρ . . . ;

*Hipp.* 208-209

πῶς ἄν δροσερᾶς ἀπὸ κρηνίδος  
καθαρῶν ὑδάτων πῶμ' ἀρυσάιμαν . . . ;

13. It is possible to interpret this as imperative rather than indicative interrogative, but the number of parallels for what might be called perception-appeals and the heightened liveliness favor the interrogative interpretation. There is also the dramatic gain of parallelism (with reversal of roles) between Medea here and Iason at the close of the play (note especially *Med.* 1405-1407).

It should be possible to assign virtually all questions in tragic dialogue and tragic lyric to one of the classes described above *or* to some hybrid of these classes. The classification is especially useful for the preliminary work of separating and setting aside the hundreds of non-problematic and (for our purposes) uninteresting cases in which a question does not evoke a response in either words or actions. In all cases, but especially in the problematic ones, rhetorical classification must be combined with a consideration of the context of the act of communication, in particular, of the degree of contact.

Two examples will show the need for such an approach. The question uttered by Herakles in *Trach.* 1010ff. has been a subject of confusion and disputation from the time of the scholiasts to Kamerbeek's commentary.

*Trach.* 1010-1014

ἦπται μου, τοιοτοί, ἦδ' αὐθ' ἔρπει. πόθεν ἔστ', ὦ  
 πάντων Ἑλλάνων ἀδικώτατοι ἄνδρες, οἷς δὴ  
 πολλὰ μὲν ἐν πόντῳ, κατὰ τε δρῖα πάντα καθαίρων,  
 ὠλεκόμαν ὁ τάλας, καὶ νῦν ἐπὶ τῷδε νοσοῦντι  
 οὐ πῦρ, οὐκ ἔγχος τις ὀνήσιμον οὐκέτι τρέπει;

The question πόθεν ἔστέ; is an indignant one; it may be classified as apistetic/epiplectic because Herakles is expressing his outraged disbelief ("I can scarcely believe that you come from any Greek stock, since you behave this way.") and is in fact belaboring those present in the hope of stirring them to show gratitude by releasing him from his suffering. The point of the question is in its asking, and the context is not one of prosaic contact between Herakles and his addressees (cf. Chapter 5, section 1[a]).<sup>14</sup> Apparently some ancient commentator (Σ *Trach.* 1010) did assume a normal, prosaic form of contact between Herakles and those on stage with him; then, presumably finding a literal reading illogical, he insisted that the question is addressed over the heads of those present to all Greeks whom Herakles had ever benefitted and that πόθεν here means ποῦ. Likewise, when Kamerbeek suggests that the interpretation favored above "yields an almost comic effect," he seems to be treating the question as a prosaic true question seeking information. He is willing to follow Campbell in assuming a rhetorical transform question ("whence?" implies "because none appeared from any quarter" (Campbell), i.e., "there is no place from which anyone appeared"), but fails to recognize the possibility of an apistetic/epiplectic question in which the Greek words are not tortured into artificial meanings. Excessive faith in the judgment of the scholiast may, as often, be a major cause of the persistence of the false interpretation, but both the ancient commentator and his followers did not make sufficient allowance for the variety of rhetorical forces which the uttering of a question may have.

Attention to the degree of contact in the context is especially important because on occasion a question which is identical in outward form to one of the types of "rhetorical" question described above and which does carry the same sort of rhetorical force nevertheless functions as a "true" question because in context it demands an answer ("tell me"). For example, consider:

14. Jebb surely recognized this, but adduced a very prosaic πόθεν-question (*Od.* 17.373) as a parallel (solely for the sense of πόθεν εἶναι); see also R. P. Winnington-Ingram, *BICS* 16 (1969) 47 n.12.

*Ant.* 921

ποιάν παρεξεληθοῦσα δαιμόνων δίκην;

*Phoin.* 1655-1656

Αν. τί πλημμελήσας, τὸ μέρος εἰ μετήλθε γῆς;

Κρ. ἄταφος ὄδ' ἀνήρ, ὡς μάθης, γενήσεται.

The former is part of a monologue-like rhesis in which Antigone is out of contact with Kreon and the chorus; *ποιάν* is a rhetorically stronger substitute for *τίνα*, and the question itself is a rhetorical transform question equivalent to declarative *οὐδεμίαν παρεξεληθοῦσα κτλ.* In the *Phoin.* stichomythia a question of similar meaning and form implies the declarative transformation *οὐδὲν πλημμελήσας*, but in a context of close contact there is also an apistic/epiplectic force. The question implies that Kreon is unlikely to produce a satisfactory answer to this particular argument and challenges him to do so. The line is also a "true" question in the sense that, with this degree of contact, it does demand a response ("Tell me!"). Kreon's response is not an answer, but a refusal to answer<sup>15</sup> expressed by the act of breaking off from the argument (but not breaking contact with Antigone, as he later does for a short time at 1676).

#### APPENDIX: OUTLINE OF THE PROPOSED CLASSIFICATION

The following outline summarizes the classification proposed in this chapter:

1. "True" or information-seeking questions
  - e.g. "What is X?" = "Tell me what X is."
2. "Rhetorical" questions
  - (a) assent-seeking questions
    - (1) rhetorical transform (universal quantifier implied)
      - e.g. "Who is more appropriate?" = "There is no one who is more appropriate."
    - (2) apodeictic (no universal quantifier implied)
      - e.g. "Am I not utterly unholy?" = "Indeed, (you must take it as demonstrated that) I am utterly unholy."
  - (b) questions expressing doubt about contemplated action (action within the power of the speaker)
    - (1) aporetic (possible courses viewed *en masse*)
      - e.g. "What ought I to do?" = "I am at a loss what I ought to do."
      - "How am I to do X?" = "I am at a loss (to pick among many possibilities) how to do X."
    - (2) deliberative (one possible course debated)
      - e.g. "Shall I do X?" = "I am deliberating, am uncertain, whether to do X."
  - (c) agnotic questions (implying ignorance, confusion, incomprehension)
    - (1) prospective (about a future action beyond the control of the speaker)
      - e.g. "What will become of me?" = "I do not know what will become of me."

15. See Chapter 5, section 3.

- (2) other (present or past reference)
  - e.g. "What noise do I hear?" = "I do not know what noise it is that I hear."
- (d) indignant and surprised questions
  - (1) apistetic
    - e.g. "Will you, the murderer of my father, live in the same house with me?"
    - = "I can't believe, I am shocked, you can't mean to propose, that you will live . . ."
  - (2) epiplectic
    - e.g. "Will you dare to do X?" = "I admonish, rebuke, browbeat, you strongly not to do X" or "Do not do X!"
- (e) imperatival and optatival questions
  - (1) imperatival
    - (α) οὐ + fut. ind. = command; οὐ μὴ + fut. ind. = prohibition
    - (β) perception-appeals
    - e.g. "Do you hear this, Zeus?" = "Hear this, Zeus."
  - (2) optatival
    - e.g. "How might someone do X?" = "I wish that someone would do X."

# Contact and Discontinuity

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